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# Bayan

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas  
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxism-Leninismo-Maoismo

English Edition

Vol. XXXVIII No. 13

July 7, 2007

[www.philippinerevolution.net](http://www.philippinerevolution.net)

## Editorial

# Arroyo regime's peace talks offer is deceptive

Malacañang's key security and defense officials are babbling about the resumption of formal peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) on condition that the New People's Army (NPA) declares a ceasefire.

The revolutionary movement is open to peace negotiations with

the ruling regime so long as the latter shows sincerity. But the NDFP outrightly rejects the unjust conditions the Arroyo regime wants to impose for the resumption of peace talks. The regime wants to anchor the resumption of peace negotiations on the surrender of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), NPA and the rest of the revolutionary forces through a premature and baseless ceasefire declaration.

The NDFP and the revolutionary movement will not succumb to threats by the regime that it would formally brand the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations under the Human Security Act (HSA) and put it in the same league as bandit groups like

the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah. The revolutionary forces will not be cowed by the regime's prattle about using the fascist HSA to crush the terrorists and defeat the revolutionary movement before 2010. Malacañang portrays the growing revolutionary movement as a spent force to cover up its losses in the battlefield and its lack of interest in entering into peace talks that would truly address and resolve the basic social issues that are at the roots of the armed conflict.

Over the past six years, the Arroyo regime has shown its hypocrisy regarding the peace talks through its failure to fulfill its obligations under signed agreements such as The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Oslo Accords of March and April 2004.

In particular, the GRP continues to violate a major provision of the Oslo Accords by refusing to work for the removal of the CPP, NPA and NDFP chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison in the US and European Union terror list. The GRP had earlier campaigned for their inclusion in the lists. The Oslo Accords clearly state that such



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listings as well as US intervention in Philippine internal affairs violate national sovereignty and are detrimental to the peace process.

The Arroyo regime is making it even more impossible for the peace talks to resume with its current plans to include the CPP and NPA in its own list of terrorist organizations. It will use the list as a pretext for waging an all-out campaign of suppression against the revolutionary forces, the legal democratic forces which it accuses of being front organizations of the CPP-NPA, and consistent anti-Arroyo forces as well as the broad opposition.

There is actually nothing new in the regime's threats to brand the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations. Despite the repeal of the anti-subversion law, the Arroyo regime has long been treating the CPP and NPA as terrorists in an attempt to shunt aside the revolutionary aspirations of the Filipino masses, malign the revolutionary armed struggle, junk the peace talks and justify its all-out terrorist war and campaign of suppression against the revolutionary forces and the people.

Since 2001, the Arroyo regime has continually wrought havoc through its terrorist campaign of political killings, abductions, illegal arrests and saturation drives, population mobility and resource control, food blockades, bombardments and forcible evacuations of entire communities. It is pushing the Filipino people to take up arms and defend their rights, obtain justice and mete appropriate punishment on the Arroyo regime and its lackeys for their fascist crimes.

The CPP, NDFP and the rest of the revolutionary forces desire the resumption of formal peace negotiations between the NDFP and the GRP which have been suspended since 2004 due to the GRP's lack of sincerity in implementing the agreements it has signed with the NDFP. The NDFP wants to make clear the fact that in the absence of a formal declaration of withdrawal from either side, the peace process continues. The NDFP remains open to exploratory talks to resolve the impediments to the suspended formal talks.

In fact, as a gesture of good-



will, the NDFP had announced its openness to a ceasefire should there be prior concurrence on its proposed 10-point Concise Agreement for an Immediate Just Peace. The agreement will create a favorable atmosphere and lay down the necessary accords for a cessation of hostilities.

But the CPP, NPA and the rest of the revolutionary forces can never agree to a ceasefire that is not grounded on anything that would benefit the masses and that violates revolutionary principles and impedes the continuing advance of armed struggle.

The CPP-NPA will never agree to a ceasefire while the Arroyo regime commits massive violations of human rights and relentlessly attacks revolutionary leaders, consultants and forces, legal democratic activists and the broad masses. Agreeing to a ceasefire under these conditions would constitute gross dereliction of duty, abandonment of initiative and a renunciation by the revolutionary forces of their right to defend themselves and the masses.

The CPP-NPA and the armed revolutionary movement will never lay down their arms for as long as

# ANG Bayan

Vol. XXXVIII No. 13 July 7, 2007

*Ang Bayan* is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English editions.

It is available for downloading at the Philippine Revolution Web Central located at:

[www.philippinerevolution.org](http://www.philippinerevolution.org)

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*Ang Bayan* is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines



class contradictions persist and there are armed counterrevolutionaries capable of putting up resistance. The revolutionary movement enters into peace talks even

as it advances armed struggle to show its determination to resolve the root causes of the armed conflict in the country.

The revolutionary armed struggle waged by the NPA constitutes the most powerful response and the biggest obstacle to the Arroyo regime's terrorist campaign, alongside the Filipino people's protest movement and the international condemnation of political killings, abductions and other grave violations of human rights in the Philippines. To renounce armed struggle and enter into a baseless ceasefire is to betray the revolution and

## NDF Bicol slams deceptive "US humanitarian mission"

**N**ational Democratic Front-Bicol spokesperson Comrade Greg Bañares criticized as hollow and deceptive the RP-US humanitarian mission implemented by US troops in Albay province from the last week of June to the first week of July.

Comrade Bañares said the American troops' real objective was to survey the province's coastline, harbors, terrain and vital public installations as part of preparations by US imperialism to intensify armed intervention in the country in the guise of military exercises set for next year.

Comrade Bañares condemned US imperialism and its lackey, the Arroyo government, for exploiting the disaster that has devastated the lives of Albay's residents. He said US imperialism was merely making a show of being helpful and humanitarian since it is its policies that have caused the grinding poverty of Bicolanos and the rest of the Filipino people.

The NDF-Bicol warned US troops not to use "humanitarian missions" as a cover to spy on territories covered by the Democratic People's Government and not to join combat operations of the AFP and PNP in these areas to avoid becoming targets of NPA attacks.

AB

## NPA seizes 25 firearms in Northern Mindanao

**T**he New People's Army seized 25 firearms in two separate raids in Agusan del Norte and Bukidnon in the last week of June. Four enemy troops were killed in these offensives.

Red fighters under NPA Front 4-A attacked a 23rd IB detachment in Barangay Lawan-Lawan, Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte at three o'clock in the morning of June 27. In a statement, National Democratic Front-North Central Mindanao Region (NDFNCMR) spokesperson Ka Cesar Renerio said the Red fighters seized 17 firearms, including seven carbines, four M14 and two M16 rifles. They also seized four grenades and communications equipment.

Three elements of the Philippine Army, including the sergeant who served as detachment commander were killed. A Red fighter was also martyred.

After the raid, soldiers killed five CAFGU personnel assigned to the detachment on suspicion that they helped the NPA plan the tactical offensive.

Earlier on, a platoon under the NPA Rexan Perez Command attacked a police station in Dangcagan, Bukidnon on the morning of June 23. The raid was over in three minutes. A policeman who resisted was the lone enemy casualty. The NPA unit broke into the police armory and seized five M16 rifles, two 9mm pistols and a .45 pistol.

Meanwhile, two CAFGU elements were killed by the NPA in a fire-fight at eight o'clock in the morning of June 24 in Sitio Monte Alegría, Barangay Kandiis, Magsaysay, Misamis Oriental. AB





## 11 soldiers killed in NPA military campaign in ICR

The Philippine Army lost 11 soldiers in three tactical offensives launched by the New People's Army last June in the Ilocos-Cordillera Region (ICR). The tactical offensives were part of an NPA military campaign against a massive AFP operation along the Abra-Mt. Province-Ilocos Sur boundary.

Seven soldiers were killed when Red fighters under the NPA Agustin Begnalen Command (ABC) ambushed a unit of the 41st IB in Barangay Wayangan, Tubo, Abra last June 25. Three soldiers were also killed when a separate unit under the ABC ambushed operating troops of the 50th IB last June 17 in Sitio Pananuman, Barangay Tubbata, Tubo.

The military operation involving two brigades from the 5th Infantry Division was a retaliatory attack against successive NPA tactical offensives last May 12-16 that caused the death of 13 soldiers from the 41st and 54th IB and a CAFGU element. Twenty-four soldiers were likewise wounded in these attacks. The NPA seized five M16s, an M203, two M14s, 1,600 rounds of ammunition and other military equipment.

Thirty-three enemy soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in various firefights in the ICR from January 7 to April 16. The enemy lost the equivalent of a company in the region in the first five months of 2007.

The ambushes were also a response to demands by the local masses to punish the troops for their numerous abuses. The fascist military's latest crime was the abduction of six civilians along the boundary of Tubo, Abra and Sagada, Mt. Province last June 15.

In a separate incident, a soldier was killed in a firefight between troops of the 21st IB Charlie Coy and the NPA in Sitio Iyokan, Barangay Mallango, Tinglayan, Kalinga last June 23.

## In the Bukidnon countryside Serving justice on a notorious criminal

The masses in the Bukidnon countryside experience people's democracy firsthand through local organs of political power. The people's democratic government effectively protects residents from notorious criminals. The people's court under the people's democratic government hears the complaints of the masses and serves justice based on the evidence. The New People's Army (NPA) is the instrument of the people's court in serving justice.

Last June 11, the NPA Rexan Perez Command (RPC) served the death sentence on Manpaanod "Andabaw" Diwangan, a notorious criminal who has long been preying on the residents of Cabanglasan and nearby areas. He was punished in Mangaod, Mandahikan, Cabanglasan, Bukidnon.

For the several decades that he was under the military's protection, Diwangan gained notoriety as a killer, marijuana planter and cattle rustler. According to the RPC, Diwangan mercilessly murdered at least eight people. He also maintained a ten-hectare marijuana farm, using seeds provided by Maj. Arturo Salvador of the Military Intelligence Battalion under the 4th ID. He stole at least 15 carabaos and two horses from residents of San Fernando and Cabanglasan towns from 1996 to 2006.

Diwangan was untouchable for many years because of his close connections with the military. Moreover, he was violent and always surrounded by armed bodyguards. But information provided by local residents eventually led to his capture and punishment by the NPA on orders from the people's court.

The people's court and the people's democratic government

*Continued on "Serving justice...," on page 5*





# Abducted ICR civilians recovered

Six civilians were successfully recovered in the last week of June after being detained by the military for almost two weeks. Through their determined and concerted action, the residents of Kili, Tubo, Abra pressed the military to release the victims despite the AFP's initial denial that the six civilians were under their custody.

Josie Padingil, Josefa Banglay, Jane Dumalig, Isabel Lawagan, Igan Lumebyang and Sumili Maguinsay were hiking home from Bangaan, Sagada when they were abducted by troops of the 54th IB along the Bangaan-Buasao-Kili trail. Their abduction was first reported in the June 21 issue of *Ang Bayan*.

Kili residents searched for the missing civilians up to the nearby villages of northern Sagada, Mt. Province. They learned that the

soldiers took the civilians with them. According to two of those abducted, the soldiers took them up to Barangay Baclin-gayan, Tubo. A week passed before Kili residents learned that the abducted civilians were detained in a military camp in Lagangilang, Abra.

Through the assistance of Sagada residents, the military was forced to release the four women in the end of June. A few days afterwards, the two young men were handed over to the Sagada municipal council. Further investigation showed that both young men suffered psychological and physical torture during the 11 days they were under military detention. **AB**

## *"Serving justice...," from page 4*

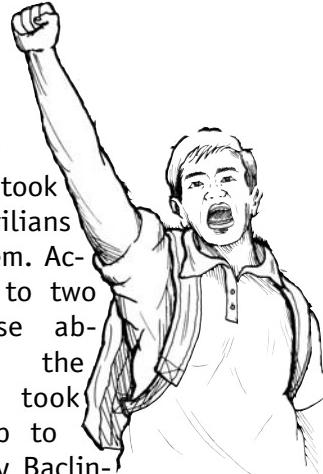
that supervises it are the real refuge of the poor in the face of the reactionary courts and other law enforcement agencies' incompetence in upholding the interests of the people and their obvious partiality for big landlords and other powerful personalities.

The cases brought by the people before the people's democratic government have been resolved satisfactorily. For instance, over the past years, at least ten stolen carabaos were recovered by the NPA and returned to the rightful owners.

Unlike the reactionary courts that burden the poor with exorbitant filing and lawyer's fees, the people's court does not demand payment.

The data upon which the people's court bases its decisions are provided voluntarily by the people to comrades operating in the area, in contrast to the reactionary courts where witnesses may be paid to present false testimony.

It is but right for the people to bring their complaints before the people's court so that they may obtain justice that has long been denied them. **AB**



# Abduction of youth leader foiled



**S**uspected military men attempted to abduct a youth leader in Quezon City, while soldiers harassed several health workers on a medical mission in Kalinga in the past two weeks.

**June 29.** Suspected military men tried to seize Anakbayan-National Capital Region chair Israel Bacutan, 15, in front of the organization's headquarters at the Welcome Rotunda in Quezon City. Bacutan was on his way back from a morning television talk show where he spoke against the militarization of campuses and urban poor communities in Metro Manila and the need for students and residents to resist it. He was able to wrench himself free from his abductors and seek help in a nearby restaurant.

**June 16-17.** Elements of the 21st and 77th IB harassed health workers on a medical mission in Sitio Ubel, Barangay Gawaan, Balbalan, Kalinga. The medical mission was conducted by the Health Alliance for Democracy and CHEST-Core (Community Health Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region).



Soldiers surrounded the venue of the medical mission. They investigated the health workers, took photographs of them and accused them of being NPA members. This, despite their protestations that they had a permit from the mayor of Balbalan to conduct the medical mission in the barangay.

After lunch, the soldiers moved on to Sitio Pipi of the same barangay where they convened a public meeting and announced that the medical mission at Sitio Ubel was an NPA activity.

This is not the first medical mission to be harassed by the soldiers. In April of 2005, AFP troops harassed volunteers conducting a health training in the Gawaan barangay hall.

**June 9-10.** At least two unionists at the Chong Won Fashion Garments Trading Inc. were wounded when paid goons attacked their picket line at the Cavite Export Processing Zone in Rosario, Cavite. Among those wounded were Resurrecion Ravelo and Florencia Arevalo, president and secretary, respectively, of the Nagkakaisang Manggagawa sa Chong Won.

Nine men aboard a van with license plate UVG 390 attacked the picket line. They threatened the strikers with knives and tore down the streamers at the picket line. They also threw away the workers' food and belongings and threatened to kill the strikers if they did not immediately dismantle their picket line.

At about 3:30 on the morning of June 10, the picket line was attacked anew by 20 masked men wearing fatigue uniforms and armed with M16 rifles. The armed men ordered the workers to lie on the ground and stole their cellphones, camera, wallets and other personal belongings.

Sister unions in Canada expressed grave concern for the safety of the Ching Won workers. The Canadian Auto Workers Union (CCWU), United Steel Workers (USW), Kairos-Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (CE-JI) and the human rights advocacy group Maquila Solidarity Network sent a formal letter of concern to the Arroyo regime.

The Chong Won union is fighting for a new collective bargaining agreement and the reinstatement of union officers fired from the company last September 2006.

AB

## Massacre in Kalinga

**M**ilitary and police troops attacked and killed 12 peasants in a community of minority settlers in Sitio Malapat, San Pascual, Rizal, Kalinga last June 25. Five other peasants were wounded in the attack.

Combined troops from the 77th IB, 21st IB and 501st Brigade of the Philippine Army, the Kalinga-PNP Provincial Mobile Group and the Cagayan-PNP Regional Mobile Group attacked the peasants on orders of landlord and former Rizal mayor Marcelo de la Cruz and his son Chris Mark, the newly elected mayor. The de la Cruzes are members of one of the clans claiming ownership of the settler's lands.

Five of those killed—Lakay Ulliba, Pedro Ulliba, Felimon Ulliba, Delfin Madayag and Johnny Gaspar Cayabo—were from the Mabaca tribe. Five others—Bangi Bakkay, Agyao Sabawil, Abok Tayaan, Sayat Addawi and Alib Baklas—were from the Butbut tribe. Another victim, Juan Attang was from the Poswoy/Ab-abaan tribe. The twelfth fatality, Conrado Ordonia, was an Ilocano migrant.

The attack started at 7 o'clock in the morning when two companies of police and military troops surrounded the community. While soldiers started advancing, policemen set fire to the peasants' houses. Residents were fired upon by a V-150 Armored Personnel Carrier, a light tank from the Philippine Army Light Armor Regiment (PALAR), five machine gun teams and the advancing troops. The troops did not heed the residents' pleas to stop the attack. At least 30 houses were razed to the ground.

The residents were forced to defend themselves against the soldiers and policemen. The battle lasted for almost ten hours.

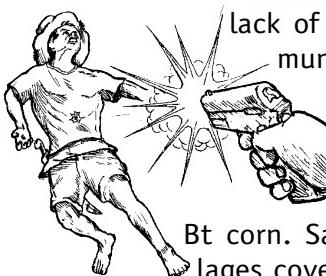
The military and police tried to cover up their crime by issuing a false statement that nine policemen were killed and ten others were wounded. In fact, only six policemen were slightly injured in the lopsided battle.

In 2003, the Supreme Court declared as public land 144 hectares of about 5,000 hectares in Rizal owned by the de la Cruz clan and the Madrigal and Romualdez estates. The land has since been claimed by long-time settlers under the government's land reform program. Most of the settlers are from various tribes in the towns of Tabuk, Tinglayan and

Balbalan who moved to Rizal due to the lack of agricultural land in the hinterland municipalities.

In 2006, the Dy family and com-prador Eduardo Cojuangco staked their claims on a large part of the land to be planted to cassava and Bt corn. San Pascual is among the eight villages covered by Cojuangco's claim.

AB





# Missing student is in military custody

Over a year has passed since elements of the 56th IB abducted University of the Philippines students Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño and farmer Manuel Merino in San Miguel, Hagonoy, Bulacan. Last month, the Cadapan family confirmed that Sherlyn was alive and under military custody as of April 2006.

Sherlyn's mother, Mrs. Erlinda Cadapan, said the military brought her daughter to her mother-in-law's house in Calumpit, Bulacan last April 11 to get some personal effects. She was constantly guarded by three armed women and two armed men in plainclothes who pretended to be members of the New People's Army (NPA). Sherlyn was not allowed to speak and was closely watched by the three women in the entire time she was in the house. Witnesses said Sherlyn looked pale and appeared frightened. Earlier on, Sherlyn had also been reportedly sighted in Bataan.

Mrs. Cadapan said Sherlyn was two months pregnant when she was abducted and might have given birth last January. She added that if that was the case,

then both her daughter and her grandchild were hostages of the military.

According to Sherlyn's mother-in-law, uniformed soldiers visited her house a day after Sherlyn was brought there, pretending to investigate the mysterious visit. The military wants to project that Sherlyn is not under their custody and is with the NPA. Sherlyn's mother-in-law, however, recognized two of the uniformed soldiers as the same men who earlier brought Sherlyn to her house and pretended to be NPA guerrillas. The AFP is covering up their involvement in the abduction by claiming that Sherlyn and Karen had joined the NPA.

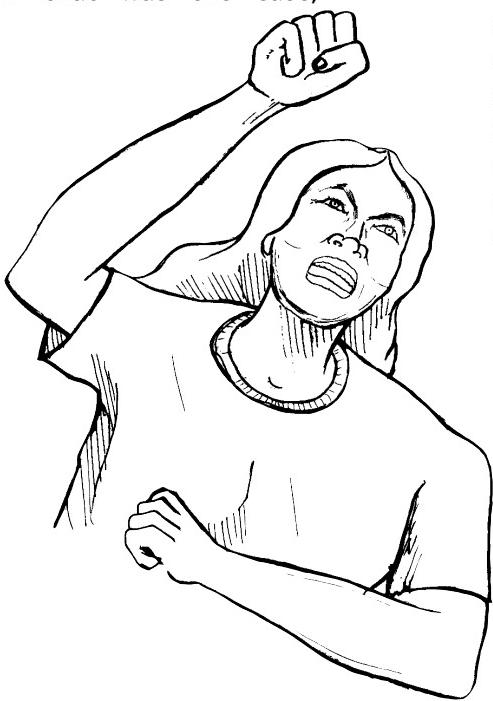
There is mounting evidence that the military is behind the abduction of Sherlyn, Karen and Manuel. A few days after they were abducted last year, human rights advocates saw the jeep used in the abduction parked at the 56th IB compound in Iba, Hagonoy. Two days after the abduction, farmer Alberto Martinez was also abducted at home by a group of masked men

who had Merino in their custody. Martinez was loaded in the same jeep with license plate RTF 597 and brought to a military detachment in Mercado, Hagonoy, Bulacan where he was interrogated by a certain Arnel Enriquez. The latter asked him if he knew a Tanya, Vincent or Lisa. From the interrogator's description, Martinez realized he was referring to Karen, Sherlyn and Manuel.

Former detainee Oscar Leuterio also testified seeing two women matching Sherlyn and Karen's description in the military camp where he had been brought in August 2006.

A court has dismissed the habeas corpus petition filed by the victims' families, saying it could not decide on the legality of Cadapan, Empeño and Merino's detention if the military refuses to admit they have the victims in their custody. But the same court found it difficult to believe the military. It said the AFP did not seem to be telling the whole truth. While the military elements were consistent in their denials, their statements often contradicted each other.

Relatives and friends, meanwhile, have yet to hear news about Empeño and Merino. AB



**The military wants to project that Sherlyn is not under their custody and is with the NPA. Sherlyn's mother-in-law, however, recognized two of the uniformed soldiers as the same men who earlier brought Sherlyn to her house and pretended to be NPA guerrillas. The AFP is covering up their involvement in the abduction by claiming that Sherlyn and Karen had joined the NPA.**



## Activists welcome US Senate bill

PROGRESSIVE Philippine organizations welcomed a US Senate bill prohibiting the use of US military aid against Filipino civilians.

The prohibition is contained in the Foreign Operations Spending Bill approved a week ago by the US Senate's Committee on Appropriations. The bill mandates the US Secretary of State to monitor military aid to the Philippines to ensure that such aid will not be used by Philippine security forces against civilians, including members of opposition political parties and human rights advocacy groups.

The prohibition was included in the bill upon the recommendation of Filipino churchworkers and human rights advocates. Filipino organizations have been lobbying at the US Congress for months to convince US lawmakers to tighten control on military aid to the Philippine government because it is being used in the extrajudicial killings of Filipino activists.

In particular, the Foreign Military Funding Bill stipulates that any increase in US military aid to the Philippines should be premised on the government's compliance with the recommendations of UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings Philip Alston, and assurance that the AFP desists from violating human

## Informant confirms Burgos abduction by ISAFP

THE abduction last April 28 of Jonas Burgos, activist son of the late anti-Marcos journalist Jose Burgos, was perpetrated by a unit of the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP).

This was revealed by an ISAFP agent to the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. The agent said Burgos was abducted for his alleged involvement in the recruitment and education work of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The informant said he once overheard members of a key intelligence unit plan the abduction of Burgos as far back as October 2006. The agents were

then saying that the activist was already "cornered."

After the abduction, the informant recognized the agents involved through the police's cartographic sketches, saying there were all members of an intelligence unit codenamed Spot 4 that covers Fairview, Quezon City where Burgos was abducted. He said the agents who abducted Burgos are codenamed "Bajam" and "Donna."

The informant added that he recognized the vehicles used in the operation based on the witnesses' descriptions. He said the vehicles can still be found in Camp Aguinaldo, the AFP's main

headquarters.

Members of the reactionary armed forces have been coming forward to confirm the Arroyo regime's involvement in such cases, despite the regime's claims to the contrary.

Three AFP generals recently announced their readiness to reveal what they know about the military's involvement in the abduction and killing of activists. They said they would do so in support of plans by newly elected senator and former Ltsg. Antonio Trillanes IV to investigate the political killings as soon as Congress opens.

## BAYAN slams Bedol special treatment

THE Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) bewailed the special treatment being accorded Maguindanao provincial elections supervisor Lintang Bedol, contrasting it with the inhumane treatment of Bayan Muna and Anakpawis congressmen when they were arrested.

Two days after his arrest for failing to appear before a hearing called by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), Bedol was released and allowed to stay in a posh Manila hotel.

The COMELEC treats Bedol as a witness, not a suspect, despite reports that he was behind massive cheating in Maguindanao.

Reports are rife that no elections took place in Maguindanao, with the ballots being filled in by Comelec officials. The cheating led to an incredible 12-0 win for Team Unity in the province. To avert a verification of provincial election results, Bedol later claimed that the certificates of canvass were lost in his tightly guarded office.

rights. One of Alston's recommendations calls for the military to desist from linking legal political organizations to armed rebel groups.

## Greed for profit behind companies' push vs. Milk Code

AN ongoing battle at the Supreme Court over the legality of the Milk Code has pushed to the fore the multinational milk companies' greed for profit.

The Milk Code of 1986 prohibits the use of false and unscientific advertisements to promote the use of infant formula for children age 0-12 months. The law was expanded in 2006 to cover milk products for children up to two years of age.

The milk companies' resistance to the Milk Code is motivated by none other than their greed for profits conservatively estimated at ₱21 billion annually from sales of infant formula in the Philippines.

Despite the Milk Code, there is an abundance of misleading information on infant formula. These include advertising claims that infant formula can make children smarter and taller. Milk companies spend over ₱5 billion annually for advertising.

Milk companies have also been aggressively bribing hospitals and doctors to push the use of infant formula in lieu of breastfeeding.

The law likewise requires milk companies to print on their labels the dangers accompanying the use of infant formula and the precautions necessary in safely administering these to infants.

### Arroyo regime keeps lid on crooked contract

LACKEYS of the Arroyo regime are doing their utmost to keep secret the anomalous contract they had signed with the Chinese-owned ZTE Corporation. ZTE was awarded the contract to set up the National Broadband Network that will link all government offices nationwide through the internet. The project is to be funded by a \$330 million loan payable with interest.

When news about the anomalous deal leaked out, the government agencies involved announced that the regime's negotiators had lost their copy of the contract. The "loss" prevents lawyers and other government representatives from reviewing the contract.

The Arroyo government failed to follow proper bidding regulations in awarding the contract to ZTE. The contract was given to ZTE despite lower bids submitted by two other companies. Amsterdam Holdings Inc. (AHI) offered to build the network for \$240 million at no cost to the government. Another company, Arescom, offered to build the network for \$135 million.

### Victim's pa spills beans on Commission on Appointments bribery

MEMBERS of the Commission on Appointments (CA) are extorting money in exchange for approving the appointment of government officials. Rep. Herminio Teves revealed that a cabal of CA members named the "Big 5" asked for up to ₱5 million in exchange for the confirmation of his son, Acting Finance Secretary Margarito Teves. Teves' confirmation has been on hold for two years. The elder Teves revealed that the "Big 5" is led by former Rep. Prospero Pichay.

A former Department of Education (DepEd) official also revealed that former Education Secretaries Florencio Abad and Edilberto de Jesus were asked to pay ₱5 million to each congressman sitting in the CA.

A high-ranking officer of the Philippine Army was also asked to pay a congressman ₱50 million to have his promotion confirmed. The congressman was reportedly insulted after receiving a mere ₱50,000 from the ap-

pointee and returned the money. Appointees assigned to areas where the illegal numbers game jueteng is rampant are asked to pay more. In still another case, a congressman member of the CA asked a military attaché to pay for all his expenses for a US tour with his mistress.

Former Agriculture Secretary and current National Anti-Poverty Commission director Domingo Panganiban also disclosed that some CA members asked him for ₱80 million worth of projects in exchange for his confirmation.

Malacañang has stopped the elder Teves from speaking further on the issue. In return, Gloria Arroyo has reappointed Margarito Teves as Finance Secretary. Meanwhile, consistently strong testimony against Pichay has forced him to admit last June 27 that congressmen in the CA did solicit favors in the form of projects, contracts and positions, among others.